1: Titiev E-5 (1948) 1951 SG4 Araucanians SG4
Mapuche-Huilliche

kul·on). Abortions are rarely sought, however, even among unmarried women, and are ordinarily performed only in conjunction with an act of witchcraft known as *koftun*, the aim of which is to render a worthless lover impotent or sterile.

I was told of no current pregnancy tabus, but Cooper stated: "It was taboo for an expectant mother to stand on the threshold of the hut";[5] and Guevara said that pregnant women were not allowed to visit the sick, watch hockey games or races, or partake of certain foods lest they bear twins.[6] All sources agree that intercourse is not forbidden during the period of gestation.

If a mother of small youngsters finds herself with child, she is likely to prepare them for the coming event by saying that a bird appeared to her in a dream and promised to send the family a new baby for a playmate. She then asks the children to be good to the infant when it arrives. Conventionally, Araucanian children are supposed to be ignorant of the circumstances pertaining to childbirth, and they are not permitted to be present when a birth takes place.

PARTURITION

Unlike the custom of earlier days,[7] a contemporary mother is expected to bear her children within her own *ruka*, and some of the more sophisticated women even go to maternity hospitals in the cities. The process of childbearing is called *choyūin*. On the reservations when the time for delivery draws near, a section of the house is set apart, and no one may come there except those who are assigned to help the patient. Young children are particularly forbidden to approach or touch their mothers, and it is the common practice for all housemates who are not assisting with the case to absent themselves as soon as labor begins.

A parturient woman is usually attended by a midwife or a

[5] Cooper, 1946, p. 732.
[6] Guevara, 1911, p. 285.
[7] There is a sharp contrast between the childbirth customs reported by informants in 1948 and the harsh picture drawn in Latcham, 1909, pp. 359–60.

10: Hilger E-5 (1946-1952) 1957
SG4 Araucanians SG4
Chile

varied from 3 to 11. One informant had 6 children (3 boys and 3 girls); another, 10, of whom 4 were boys; another, 8, 3 of whom had died. A 51-year-old man had 11 children living and 1 dead: the oldest was 25; the youngest, 1 year and 8 months. One woman had given birth to 20 children, many of whom had died when small. One informant had delivered 9 children of whom 2 were stillborn, 1 premature, and 1 aborted.

PRENATAL PERIOD

PERIOD OF GESTATION

An expectant mother is spoken of as "being pregnant" or as "having been left pregnant." The month of delivery is known. "By counting the moons we know when the child will be born: the mother carries a boy 9 months; a girl, less time than that." The day of delivery is not reckoned, even approximately. "She [pointing at a listener-in] went into her yard to get wood; her baby was born while she was out there; it came so unexpectedly. One woman here who enjoys dancing those Chilean dances gave birth to a girl while she was dancing at a get-together in her ruka."

Most informants had not thought about the question as to when the fetus becomes human; all agreed that the child was human at birth. "Why else treat it like a human being at once after birth?" One woman reasoned that it might be human earlier, "for if it is born prematurely we treat it like all babies are treated, and if it is born dead we bury it in the cemetery just like other people."

ABORTIONS

An occasional expectant woman today, as formerly, is known to induce an abortion. If she is married, the reason for an abortion is usually that her family is large and no additional children are desired; if she is unmarried, it is because of the disgrace attached to giving birth out of wedlock. "I do not believe, however, that abortions are induced to any extent today," said the interpreter, a non-Araucanian herbalist, "for most families are large, and many illegitimate children are born." According to Araucanian women, the abortifacients have to be taken during the first month of pregnancy. Abortifacients spoken of were water in which powdered alum and soap used in washing had been dissolved, water into which the setting of a grindstone had been stirred, and a powerful plant (unidentified) from which a decoction was made. Cooper (1946, p. 733) notes that Gusinde lists

10: Hilger E-5 (1946-1952) 1957
SG4 Araucanians SG4
Chile

with scissors, girls will be born to him; if with a knife, boys—a belief, non-Araucanians thought, taken from Chileans. This may have been known to schoolboys who warned a boy against using scissors in cutting his damaged fingernails. "A boy had better use a knife," one advised. The machi (sorcerer) had no power to produce sex. 842

In instances, it is believed, the sex of the unborn child can be predicted. If an expectant mother has much nausea, she is carrying a girl; also if her eyes have less color than usual, and her face is pale. If her complexion is fair and there is no change in the color of her eyes, she is carrying a boy. Also, if her last baby was a girl, and she has pain throughout her body during the present pregnancy, she is carrying a boy. If a man dreams of a falcon, his next child will be a boy. 787 842

REBIRTH

Araucanians have no belief in reincarnation. One old man had wondered about a child that he saw born with two teeth, but he had no explanation for it. Other informants had neither heard of nor seen a child born with teeth, with a patch of white hair, with snips out of the ears, or with scars—signs of rebirth among Chippewa or Arapaho (Hilger, 1951, p. 4, and 1952, pp. 5-6).[8] Beliefs regarding rebirth interested informants. "What kind of Indians can these be that they can be reborn!" 775 845

FOOD AND CONDUCT TABOOS

In Coñaripe and Panguipulli areas prenatal food taboos were not known to exist. In one section of Alepúe area a pregnant woman must not eat jaiba (ranūm), a small sea animal that attaches itself to a rock, or she will have a difficult delivery, for "the child will attach itself tight to the uterus." In another section of the same area, to prevent similar subsequent effects, all men and women of childbearing age and all children must refrain from eating jaiba. Two women, probably 60 and 80 years of age, when young had been instructed by older women not to eat jaiba, but neither of them believed in its supposedly bad effects. Both mentioned women and their husbands who had eaten it, and the women, they knew, had each given birth to many children and all deliveries had been easy. 262 843

[8] All references to the Chippewa in the present study are found in Hilger, Sister M. Inez, Chippewa child life and its cultural background, Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 146, 1951; and those to the Arapaho, in Arapaho child life and its cultural background, Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 148, 1952.

[128]

10: Hilger E-5 (1946-1952) 1957
SG4 Araucanians SG4
Chile

262 In Alepúe area, also, a pregnant woman must not eat apples, honey, or chili; not at any time are she and her husband to eat the double yolk of an egg, for "it will make them the parents of twins." Coñaripe informants were interested and amazed to know that Araucanians in Alepúe area had the above beliefs. "We have no such beliefs here and I have no faith in them," said one. "I know, for instance, that I have eaten two yolks of one egg, and so has my husband, and we have no twins."

843 A pregnant woman must not look about too much, for she may happen to see something that will frighten her and may cause her to have an abortion or a premature delivery. An expectant mother will have a difficult delivery if she lifts the cover off a boiling kettle or places it on one. The unborn child will adhere to her uterus. She may, however, put prepared food into a kettle of boiling water and also stir boiling food. If no one else is around, she will ask even a small child to lift or replace the cover. She will also have a difficult delivery if she sits on anything made of wood, such as a bench, chair, or log—her child's head will grow out of proportion if she does. According to Cooper's sources she must not stand on the threshold of the ruka (1946, p. 732).

CHILDBIRTH, AND CARE OF MOTHER AND NEWBORN BABY

PLACE OF BIRTH, ATTENDANTS, PERSONS PRESENT, PROCEDURE, CELEBRATION, FUMIGATION, RECORDING THE BIRTH

844 Birth is spoken of as "to have a baby" or "to have a new baby." Both Araucanian and non-Araucanian informants were certain that the child was always born in the home ruka and not in a temporary shelter. According to Cooper's sources (1946, p. 732), the woman retired to a temporary shelter near a stream or the sea when labor pains began; to give birth within the family ruka was thought to bring evil upon those who lived there.

Persons present at a birth are the woman's husband and children

---

PLATE 1

Views of Araucanian country in Chile

133 241 797 1, Alepúe area: Burnt-over lands, plowed field at right, ruka with adjoining fenced-in garden and nearby fenced-in potato patch, grazing land, and wheat field; Río Mehuín and its valley in the distance, and the Pacific Ocean beyond. 2, Coñaripe area: Pasturelands of an Araucanian in the foreground, Catholic mission buildings in the distance, and the Andes in the background. 3, Panguipulli area, the western end of Lago Panguipulli in the Andes: Pastureland in the foreground, Catholic mission, wheat fields on the hill at the right, and Volcano Shoshuenco in the distance. 4, Boroa area, looking north toward Río Cautín: Pasturelands, plowed hills, and river bottom.

10: Hilger E-5 (1946-1952) 1957
SG4 Araucanians SG4
Argentina

SIZE OF FAMILIES

Childless couples were exceptions. Children in families of informants numbered 6 to 15, with boys predominating. An informant in her sixties told of large families of former years. She herself had given birth to 15 children. "There was always a baby on the way; soon after one was born, the next one was on the way." An 80-year-old woman had given birth to 15 children, all of whom reached maturity; 9 were living at the time of the present study. She added: "One couple I knew had 20 children, 18 boys and 2 girls, and all lived. That is the way it was formerly." 163

PRENATAL PERIOD

PERIOD OF GESTATION

As soon as a woman knew she was pregnant, she told her household about it, and from then on counted the months (moons) toward the birth of her child, which was expected in the ninth month. At three months the woman would say, "It is the third moon," and from then on considered the fetus a person, "like all other persons; that meant it had the spirit of a person. I do not know whether the child had a soul by that time, or not; no one can know that." 843 [774]

Some believe there is a flying snake that dislikes pregnant women, for "it flies about such a woman and whips her with its tail; it has never done so to me, but people say it happens."

Talking of pregnancy will not cause a woman to become pregnant, a belief held by the Arapaho (Hilger, 1952, pp. xii-xiii); but persons speaking of babies can expect someone in the kinship group to bring them a child to be reared, generally a grandchild. [171]

SEX PREFERENCE

In all probability there was, in general, no sex preference. Some informants, however, spoke of preferences. A 60-year-old woman believed that formerly boys were preferred to girls; "or why were we always so glad when it was a boy that was born; people acted as if they were very happy about it. One can observe the same today." A 70-year-old man thought it made no difference; that boys and girls were equally welcome; the thing of importance was that the child came into the world and that the mother did not take sick. An 80-year-old woman would say, "Something is coming; we shall wait to see what it is." But she preferred girls, since a daughter helps her mother and is more of a companion to her than a son. A Trumpul 842

10: Hilger E-5 (1946-1952) 1957
SG4 Araucanians SG4
Argentina

842 informant knew that in the area in which she was reared, girls were preferred to boys, because girls enhanced the income of their families at marriage (referring to the bridal price). To which a woman listening in remarked, "On the other hand, a son enhanced his father's house not only with his bride but with all the gifts that both he and his bride received" (referring to the exchange of gifts at marriage).

SEX PREDICTION

842 787 No manner of producing sex was known, but there were ways of predicting the sex of an unborn child. A boy could be expected if the fetus lay high in the mother's body, and the veins on the back of her hands stood out prominently—"they say that her blood vessels are excited"—and her complexion was clear and rosy, that is, if she looked well in general. "People notice this and say, 'She is carrying a little man.'" If the woman's hips were broad, the veins on her hands flat, her face pale, and she gave the impression of not feeling well, persons said, "She is carrying a little woman."

The sex of the child to be born was also predicted from the first word spoken by the last child born. If the child says "mother," it will be a girl; if "father," a boy. "And this always comes true."

REBIRTH

775 845 There is no belief in reincarnation. "When a person dies, it means that that one is now gone forever." A child born with teeth is remarked about, but no one attaches any significance to it.

PRENATAL FOOD AND CONDUCT TABOOS

843 262 [171] The father of an unborn child is in no way affected by food taboos or food prescriptions; his pregnant wife is. She must not eat grease, for it will cause her baby to have a running nose. Also, she must not eat brain of any animal—the effect of doing so was not known. Eating speckled eggs did not cause a child to have freckles, something the Chippewa believed (Hilger, 1951, p. 7). The pregnant woman was to be provided with the food she craved, "like apples or chicha (alcoholized cider), or anything at all, except grease and brain." Not obtaining the craved foods might cause her to abort. Pregnant women are known to differ in food habits. "One woman will want to eat, another has no appetite; one can eat much and heavy foods, another cannot."

843 784 The father of an unborn child was not hampered by conduct taboos or prescriptions. His pregnant wife was warned not to fall or to lift

10: Hilger E-5 (1946-1952) 1957
SG4 Araucanians SG4
Argentina

heavy objects; either might cause her to abort. Should she happen to see a hunchback, a lame or maimed person, or one with an ugly face or an unusual eye, she was to do no more than glance at him; a prolonged look might cause her child to be deformed in the same manner. "One of my sons was born with only one finger on his right hand; I had looked at a man with such a hand while I was carrying the boy." If a pregnant woman looks at an eclipse through an opening in the roof and simultaneously scratches her body, the child will have a black mark on the corresponding part of its body. "I know a woman who rubbed her eye during an eclipse and thereby caused her child to have a black ring around one eye." Nothing can be done during pregnancy to make a child pretty. "In that respect the child will be born as God wants it to be." 843 784

CHILDBIRTH, AND CARE OF MOTHER AND NEWBORN BABY

PLACE OF BIRTH, ATTENDANTS, PERSONS PRESENT, AIDS, PROCEDURE, RECORDING THE BIRTH

The proper place for the birth of a child was the home, that is the toldo, especially in winter. If the birth occurred in the toldo, a corner was curtained off with a blanket, behind which the baby was born. On rare occasions, in summer, birth took place in a shelter erected close to the toldo. An unmarried mother not infrequently delivered her child in an unfrequented place—in a wood, if one was nearby. "Such a woman feared the anger of her father." 844

There were no professional midwives. The woman's mother assisted with the delivery, unless she was too old or otherwise incapacitated, in which case the woman's mother-in-law, or, occasionally, another woman who was a close relative did so. In dire necessity a man assisted. One man had done so because there was a fiesta going on, to which everyone else had gone. An unmarried mother was assisted "by some woman whose heart moved her to do so, usually a friend."

Persons who were present, but who did not assist, were the woman's husband and her father; sometimes the children of the couple were also present, but just as often they were sent out to play.

In general, women had easy deliveries and took no decoctions to facilitate birth. A 65-year-old woman believed the easy deliveries to be due to a decoction which was given to young girls, "when they were only so tall [about 4 years old]. It was given to them so that they would have no labor pains, once their time came to be mothers." If a woman in labor began to feel weak, "you know it strikes some women in the heart," she was given a stimulating drink made of 844 278